

Moving the Needle

NO. 4

مجمع التنمية الفلاحي بالعرو
وحدة تشييد الأمشاج العظيمة والطبية



AU TRIP TO THE NORTH-WEST

AU team meets with project beneficiaries in the NW

MEPI STUDENT LEADERS PROGRAM

Tunisian students travel to the U.S after a 2-year hiatus

PROMISE - SELECTUSA SUMMIT

First Tunisian delegation ever to participate in the SelectUSA Summit



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The U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) provides programming that responds to the needs of the Tunisian people to accelerate economic development and strengthen democracy. The AU works in coordination with other U.S. government agencies as well as the international community to target distinct and defined elements of Tunisian economic and governance reforms. The AU manages projects funded through Economic Support Bilateral Funds, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) local grants, and three MEPI leadership programs.



ANNOUNCEMENT



Tomorrow's Leaders Program

Now Accepting Applications for Academic Year 2023-24

 [TomorrowLeadersProgram.org](https://tomorrowleadersprogram.org)



To all aspiring Tunisian undergraduate and graduate students, the 2022 #MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders program is now open! Tomorrow's Leaders offers academic scholarships and leadership development training for accomplished students who represent the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's cultural, religious, and geographic diversity. Successful candidates will receive full tuition and internship opportunities at the American University of Beirut (AUB), the American University in Cairo (AUC), and the Lebanese American University (LAU). Submit your applications before December 5 at <https://bit.ly/3eqvmzF>



ANNOUNCEMENT



If you are a university student between the age of 20 and 24 years old who can demonstrate a commitment to leadership and civic engagement in your community, you should apply to the 2023 #MEPI Student Leaders (SL) program. Participants will be placed at U.S. universities where they will complete academic coursework, develop leadership, and project management skills, and expand their understanding of the civil society and participatory governance processes in the United States and the MENA region.

To learn more about the program, you can visit the following website: <https://studentleaders-apply.smapply.io/>
Applications are due by December 19, 2022.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS

EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT (EFE) TUNISIE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY AND THE CLOSING OF THE AU FUNDED EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

Chargée d’Affaires Natasha Franceschi joined the Minister of Vocational Training and Employment Nasreddine Nsibi to celebrate Education for Employment's 10th anniversary in Tunisia and the successful completion of a U.S. Embassy funded project to support job creation for young Tunisians from marginalized communities. Since 2012, the U.S. Embassy has helped EFE create more than 1,500 jobs across Tunisia. During the anniversary celebration, EFE highlighted its partnerships with the private sector, its customized training programs and its ability to place educated youth in jobs. As part of the most recent project, EFE Tunisie opened a new office in Zarzis, ensuring better proximity to young job seekers in remote southern regions. The Zarzis office helped launch StarTech, a technology incubator that gives young entrepreneurs the skills to start or expand their businesses.



WE BELIEVE THAT A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY AND A THRIVING PRIVATE SECTOR ARE CORNERSTONES TO A STRONG DEMOCRACY AND A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY - AU CHIEF ADAM THIBAUT

Thank you for your collaboration and contribution to EPE-Tunisia's success.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

وزارة التشغيل والتكوين المهني
Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
Promoting youth employment and entrepreneurship
تعزيز فرص التشغيل وريادة الأعمال
10 Years
efe
10



*"We are making this investment because we believe in Tunisia's future. The U.S. Embassy is particularly focused on youth entrepreneurship and private sector engagement."
Chargée d'Affaires a.i., Natasha Franceschi*



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



PROMISE SUPPORTS THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FIRST TUNISIAN DELEGATION EVER AT THE SELECT USA SUMMIT

On September 7, Chargée d’Affaires Natasha Franceschi hosted the first Tunisian delegation to participate in the SelectUSA Investment Summit. The AU’s PROMISE project funded all travel expenses and provided mentoring for seven of these Tunisian entrepreneurs at the annual summit that took place June 26-29 in National Harbor, Maryland. At the summit, the entrepreneurs exhibited their products at branded booths, pitched their projects to a panel of investors and attempted to gain a foothold in the U.S. market.

This is the first time Tunisians participated in the SelectUSA summit. Additionally, all the female participants were chosen for the Select Global Women in Tech mentorship network, a platform that matches the entrepreneurs with successful American businesswomen based on their industries, goals, and expertise. To date, the project has supported more than 290 microenterprises, leading to the creation of more than 355 new jobs. The U.S. Embassy is proud to support talented, young entrepreneurs who are committed to expand Tunisia’s dynamic start-up ecosystem to the U.S market.



U.S. Embassy Tunis Assistance Unit

BUILDING INNOVATION
AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



"The U.S. Embassy recognizes the significant role of young entrepreneurs in contributing to economic growth and social change in Tunisia and values your commitment to creating and growing your companies."

Chargée d'affaires, a.i. – Natasha Franceschi



IDMEJ PROJECT LAUNCH CEREMONY TO SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Chargée d’Affaires, a.i. Natasha Franceschi joined the Minister of Social Affairs Malek Zahi and the Minister of Family, Women, Childhood and the Elderly Amel Moussa Belhaj to launch the Idmej (inclusion in Arabic) project to support vulnerable communities. Through this \$4 million grant, Idmej aims to reduce gender-based violence (GBV) and strengthen the capacity of Tunisian institutions to enforce laws that protect victims’ rights. Idmej also supports the rights of people with disabilities by creating a digital benefits card to improve access to available public services.



The first objective of Idmej is to help thousands of GBV victims by improving access to women’s shelters and community centers that offer legal aid and critical support services. The project’s second objective is to develop a system of data collection in to better identify people with disabilities and connect them to needed services. The goal is to create 400,000 new disability cards with QR codes and replace the large paper disability cards. The project’s third objective is to deploy advocacy and awareness campaigns implemented by civil society, the government, and the private sector that change behavior and reduce the stigmatization of victims of gender-based violence and people with disabilities in Tunisia.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



"The U.S. Embassy is committed to protecting the rights of all people, particularly the most vulnerable, and to helping civil society foster an inclusive environment for all Tunisians to thrive." - Chargée d'affaires, a.i. - Natasha Franceschi



I-WATCH AND U.S. EMBASSY STRENGTHEN CITIZEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Chargée d'affaires, a.i. Natasha Franceschi joined the I-Watch team for the closing ceremony of the "Upstream Access to Information" project. Through 350 partnerships with municipalities and associations across Tunisia, this Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) project provided Tunisians with greater access to government information and increased public transparency.

The U.S. Embassy remains committed to supporting Tunisian civil society to promote good governance and accountability.

*"Projects like 'Upstream Access to Information' showcase the shared commitment of Tunisia and the United States to civil society and citizen activism to promote good governance, transparency, and accountability."
Chargée d'affaires, a.i.
– Natasha Franceschi*



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS



STEP Project Trains more than 650 Student Entrepreneurs



The 'Support for Tunisian Entrepreneurial Pathways' (STEP) project team hosted a closing ceremony in the presence of U.S. Embassy Political Counselor Heather Kalmbach. Through STEP, more than 650 student entrepreneurs received targeted training in business concepts and entrepreneurship.

In addition, the top ten students participated in the project's incubation program to launch their own businesses. We remain committed to strengthening Tunisia's entrepreneurial environment, facilitating access to finance, and promoting innovation.



EVENTS

ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION ERICA THIBAUT JOINS THE LAUNCH OF THE “TOURISM UP” DIGITAL PLATFORM



Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Erica Thibault joined the Media and Youth Association (AMAJ) for the launch of the “Tourism Up” digital platform. The project helps hotels and guest houses in Tozeur and Kebili attract more international visitors. “Tourism Up” is also providing in-depth customer service training for more than 200 tourism professionals. Through projects like this, the U.S. Embassy is committed to strengthening Tunisia’s tourism sector to drive economic prosperity.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF

SIXTEEN RESEARCHERS COMPLETE THE IP BOOSTER PROGRAM



The Assistance Unit (AU) congratulates the 16 PhD researchers and young innovators who successfully completed the third edition of the Intellectual Property (IP) Booster program, part of the Promise project. The 4-week acceleration program provided mentoring from IP experts in different fields, such as trademarks and data protection. The U.S. Embassy is proud to invest in Tunisia's future by equipping young Tunisian entrepreneurs and innovators with the necessary tools and skills to thrive in a fast-moving world.



ANTI-CORRUPTION PROJECT RELEASES THE IGOVEP REPORT

The Tunisian Public Controller Association, with the support of the “Increasing Accountability in Tunisia” project, released the second edition of the Public Enterprise Governance Index (IGOVEP) report.

The IGOVEP, the first index of its kind in Tunisia, measures the quality of governance in public enterprises, offering activists an opportunity to target reforms to strengthen governance. The project reinforces USG commitment to strengthen Tunisian government institutions capacity to fight corruption.



TEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS COMPLETE THE S4C INCUBATION PROGRAM

The AU Student 4 Change project provided ten university students and future entrepreneurs with a seven-month incubation program that included personalized coaching and training on different business themes, such as finance and digital marketing. At the end of the program, each participant received a \$3,000 grant to support his or her entrepreneurial pursuits. The U.S. Embassy recognizes the importance of economically empowering and supporting young students and entrepreneurs to advance Tunisia's economy.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

NEWS IN BRIEF

SIX STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SUMMER PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES

We congratulate the six students who participated in the Johns Hopkins University summer program in the United States. The students learned about detecting and treating non-communicable diseases as part of the “Tunisian Health Center for University Research Excellence and Sustainability (CURES)” project.



The medical and health students gained first-hand experience, improved their skills, and deepened their knowledge. The U.S. Embassy is proud to support research and innovation in the healthcare sector by connecting these talented Tunisian students with top American experts.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

TRIPS



CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. NATASHA FRANCESCHI VISITS WOMEN-LED ESSENTIAL OILS COOPERATIVES IN EL KEF AND JENDOUBA

During her visit to the northwest, Chargée d'affaires, a.i. Natasha Franceschi visited the Ain Babbouch agricultural cooperative in Tejerouine where she met with founder Lamia Cherni and women artisan members of the cooperative to learn about their work in producing essential oils, floral waters, and dried herbs. She also visited El Baraka, an agricultural and artisanal cooperative in Jendouba led by Mabrouka Athimni, a pioneer in distilling essential oils and floral waters. In addition to managing her business, Mabrouka volunteers her time to train other women artisans. As part of the U.S. commitment to supporting Tunisian entrepreneurs in the handicraft sector, the two cooperatives, among other beneficiaries, received new distillation equipment through the AU's ACEA Tunisia project. U.S. Embassy Tunisia is working closely with Tunisian artisans, through this \$5.6M program, to help them market their products, expand their businesses, and access new international markets.



CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. NATASHA FRANCESCHI VISITS THE HANDICRAFT VILLAGE IN DJERBA

As part of her visit to Djerba, Chargée d'affaires, a.i. Natasha Franceschi enjoyed a tour of the handicraft village in Houmet Souk. Chargée Franceschi visited with talented local artisans and learned more about the role of the handicraft sector in supporting Tunisia's economy. The AU is helping Tunisian artisans market their products, expand their businesses, and access new international markets. The U.S. is proud to be the leading destination for Tunisian handicrafts, with more than \$12 million worth of handicrafts exported in 2021, an increase of 41% compared to 2020.



CHARGÉE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. NATASHA FRANCESCHI MEETS WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AT THE POLYCLINIQUE DJERBA CENTER

Chargée d'Affaires, a.i. Natasha Franceschi met with health professionals at the Polyclinique Djerba Center and delivered certificates for completing training in the AU's Education for Employment program. Among the 684 young Tunisians EFE provided technical training and helped secure employment opportunities, 181 came from Djerba and Zarzis. The U.S. Embassy is proud to support Djerba and surrounding areas' private sector and to empower youth to spur economic growth.



ASSISTANCE UNIT'S TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST

In an effort to better engage with program beneficiaries and partners, Grant Officer Jenny Cho and M&E Specialist Isaac Morrison joined the AU team for a monitoring trip to the Northwest.

The team participated in the launch event of the pottery cluster in Seliana, an activity in the Collaborative Action for Handicraft Exports (ACEA in French) project. The trip was an opportunity to meet the women artisans in the region and to learn about their challenges, such as access to raw materials.



TRIPS

The team reiterated the Embassy's commitment to collaborate with the Tunisian people to support artisans, create jobs, and improve the lives of hard-working entrepreneurs and their families throughout Tunisia.

The AU and ACEA teams delivered the second batch of equipment (\$45,000) to five women led cooperatives in the governorates of Seliana and Beja. The delivery included oil distillation equipment, which will enable the cooperatives to increase their productivity with more modernized work processes.

In addition, the trip was an opportunity to visit the Center of Professional Agricultural Training in Hakim Sud. The \$5 million FARMER project helped modernize the center and provided technical training to its instructors.

Finally, the AU team visited SEBN-TN, an international automotive factory and a partner of the \$2.85 million employment project with EFE. This project activity placed more than 75 unemployed youth in training and employment opportunities at SEBN-TN.





ACEA ECO-CIRCUIT IN TOUJANE

To highlight the diversity and richness of Tunisian textiles and further empower the women who make them, the ACEA project launched its first eco-tourism pilot circuit in Toujane, one of the most anthropologically and historically rich regions in Tunisia.

The initiative helps Tunisians better discover their own country, while creating a larger market for local artisans who work in less visited parts of the country. The initiative also helps the artisans grow their networks and develop new business partnerships.



THREE MEPI ALUMS GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING THE MEPI DAY OF SERVICE

We would like to congratulate our three #MEPI alumni for their outstanding work during this year's MEPI Day of Service where alumni of MEPI exchange programs performed local community initiatives.

This year, MEPI Leaders for Development Fellowship alum Wajdi Hamza chose to promote the beautiful city of Makthar in Siliana by teaching youth Taekwondo within the Roman archeological ruins.

Arij Soussi and Sana Touir, two Student Leaders Program alum partnered to organize an “Entrepreugenic” workshop with university students of Monastir where they conducted an info session on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the steps necessary to create a business. During the event, Arij and Sana highlighted different support opportunities, competitions, and scholarships, such as the Founder Institute Competition, and the Fulbright scholarship. Our alumni made the MEPI Day of Service an exceptional day filled with a spirit of determination and hope for a better Tunisia.



AU ORGANIZES A NETWORKING EVENT FOR MEPI ALUM

To empower MEPI alumni, the AU organized a networking event to match young alumni entrepreneurs with business experts, international organizations, and other Tunisian entrepreneurs. The U.S. Embassy is committed to supporting young entrepreneurs explore new opportunities and advance their businesses.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

MEPI ALUM



FOUR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDENT LEADERS PROGRAM

We are happy to announce that four talented Tunisian students participated in the MEPI Student Leaders Program after a two-year suspension due to the pandemic! Fatma Zahra, Sarra, Yesamine, and Fares traveled to the U.S. as part of an intensive five-week leadership and civic engagement program. They took academic courses at different U.S. universities where they developed their leadership and project management skills and expanded their understanding of American civil society.



AU MEETS WITH THE NEW MEPI LDF PARTICIPANTS

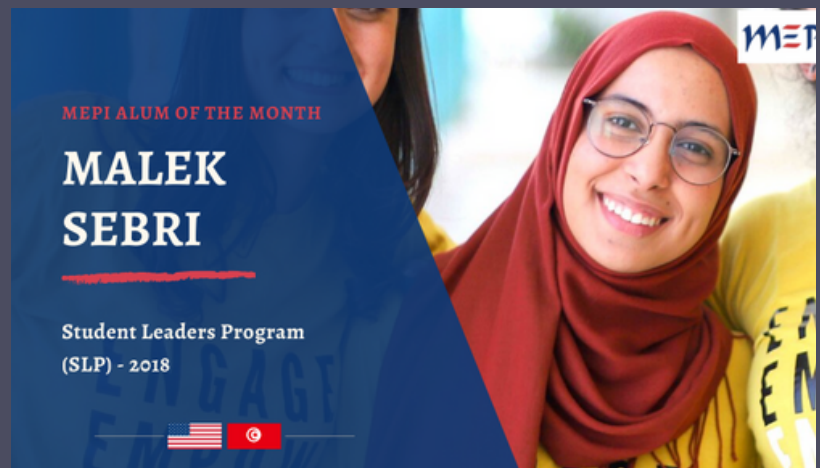
The AU team met with the new Leadership Development Fellowship (LDF) participants. The LDF Fellowship engages emerging leaders across sectors in the Middle East and North Africa to help them identify innovative ways to address social and economic challenges in their local communities. This fellowship advances participants' civic engagement and social entrepreneurship by providing advanced technical skills, financial and professional resources, and regional support networks. Emerging leaders with an established track record in civic engagement and social entrepreneurship are encouraged to apply for this application-based fellowship.

EMPOWERING YOUTH IN RURAL AREAS IS NO LONGER A DREAM.

Malek Sebri is a true story of perseverance. The first time she applied to the 2017 MEPI Student Leaders Program, she did not make it past the interview phase. Malek did not give up. She reapplied the following year with an improved version of her project and a clearer vision to advance education equity in Tunisia. And she was accepted.

During her participation in the MEPI program, Malek sharpened her vision for this civic engagement project, and she improved her leadership and communication skills.

Malek created the Empowering Students in Rural Areas Reform (ESRAR) project which focuses on providing students in marginalized areas with interactive workshops that develop soft skills. This innovative curriculum gives students access to an alternative, practical experience that is different from the theoretical learning that most schools provide. Malek said that the MEPI Student Leaders program inspired her and gave her the tools to make ESRAR a reality.



During the first edition of ESRAR summer camps in 2019, she successfully empowered over 100 primary school students by delivering informal educational sessions with a focus on health, hygiene, and well-being. Beyond being their mentors, the ESRAR team became a large family. During the pandemic, they faced many challenges since their work was focused on interactive, in-person camps. However, this did not stop Malek from diversifying program activities and impacting a larger target audience. Her team was able to organize fundraising events, host discussion circles, and facilitate multiple training sessions in marketing, project management, public speaking, and videography.

Malek said that the MEPI Student Leaders program inspired her and gave her the tools to make ESRAR a reality.

EMBODYING THE ‘GOOD PHARMACIST’ APPROACH

Dhia is a young pharmacist who earned a place in the 2018 MEPI Student Leaders Program where he studied leadership and social entrepreneurship at Montana State University with students from all over the world. The experience immersed Dhia in a network of outstanding individuals with rich backgrounds and unique interpersonal skills. It was then that he realized how a global network of brilliant change-makers could boost his efforts to become a “good pharmacist” and, ultimately, a global change maker.

After the 2018 Tunisian municipal elections, Dhia created the Encouraging Democracy project to engage local communities in public policy decision-making. He helped communicate the concerns of citizens to the elected municipal council through an interactive dashboard. As a result, the council gained a greater understanding of the citizens’ needs. Through this innovative project, Dhia earned a place in the “Accelerator Workshop,” organized by Georgetown University and MEPI for the top 30 students from the MENA region.



During the pandemic, and as a participant in the Ambassadors for Dialogue Program, Dhia tackled the growing global mental health issue. He received a grant through the MEPI Alumni Venture Fund to partner with the Tunisian Scouts and conduct the “Mental Health Post-Crisis” project, supporting local communities. Dhia arranged a training for his fellow Ambassadors for Dialogue to conduct discussion sessions addressing this sensitive topic. Then, he galvanized them to initiate dialogue sessions involving youth from all across Tunisia.

Recently, Dhia has adapted his innovative style to the private sector. He is now the Chief Operating Officer at “Polygone”, an innovation and training hub for early-stage start-ups, which he co-founded with a former university professor. Moreover, they founded “ASQII”, a health-tech start-up that uses AI and Robotics to provide an optimal health experience for patients. (See more at: www.asqii.tn)



A PASSION TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY

In 2019, Allaeddine Rezgui, a young Tunisian jurist, conflict resolution trainer, civil society activist, and a legal department employee at the Ministry of Agriculture was selected to participate in the MEPI Leaders for Development Fellowship (LDF) for 3 months in Lebanon. He used this fellowship to pursue courses in conflict resolution, project management, and democratic processes at the American University of Beirut.

The LDF program was the first time he was in direct contact with young leaders from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the diverse environment influenced his world view. For instance, he witnessed civil society organizations (CSOs) in Lebanon respond to the needs of their communities, such as their effort to counter the trash crisis.

After participating in the LDF program, Allaeddine, implemented a project in close collaboration with the local authorities in La Marsa to protect the rights of immigrants, creating a center for social services and legal support to immigrants.



He also partnered with the United Nations Development Program, other CSOs, and local authorities to implement the “Makch Alone” initiative to combat violence against women and strengthen women leadership. Allaeddine has also pioneered several other projects, helping hospitals fight COVID-19, instilling youth with democratic values, and teaching women about climate change. For his efforts supporting the community, the local authorities in La Marsa honored Allaeddine in 2020.

“When I came back to Tunisia, I felt the need to be more aware of the Tunisian context and the need for young leaders to act, especially since Tunisia is going through a period of difficult democratic transition. I felt I was needed, like many other youth, to make a change.” - Allaeddine Rezgui



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